

EDUCATION

Parents call Va. magnet school policy unfair

Special to Sentinel-Voice
 ARLINGTON, Va. — Upset that their daughters did not get into kindergarten at a magnet school, two white families have filed a legal challenge to the lottery admission system claiming it favors minorities.

Grace Tuttle and Rachel Sechler were not among the 46 students admitted by the Arlington Traditional School's lottery, which is weighted to give additional chances to minority and poor students and those whose first language is not English.

In a lawsuit filed Thursday in U.S. District Court in Alexandria, their families asked a judge to order the public school to rerun the lottery without the preferences.

Last May, a federal judge struck down the magnet school's quota

system, which set aside half of the slots for minority children. The judge said the system illegally discriminated against whites.

Arlington responded by setting up the lottery, which school spokeswoman Lisa Farbstein believes will withstand the latest court challenge.

"The judge said you could not use just race. We have used three different factors in crafting this policy," she said, referring to race, language and income. "We're pretty confident that the policy will satisfy the court."

Legal analysts said it wasn't clear whether Arlington's new policy is constitutional. The last time the U.S. Supreme Court specifically addressed the issue, a divided court said race could be used as one of several factors.

Arlington officials said they adopted the system because they wanted the school's population to resemble the entire district's. About 59 percent of Arlington students belong to various minority groups.

Under the new system, a minority student whose family has a low income and who doesn't speak English at home has 16 times as many chances as another minority student whose family isn't poor and who does speak English at home.

Of the 69 students admitted to the school this past year, 31, or 45 percent, were minorities. Forty-six of the slots were filled by lottery while 23 went to siblings of students already attending the school.

Of the school's 316 students, 192, or 61 percent, are white.

Blacks need to accept, tell real story on race relations

By Kwame Ansah
Special to Sentinel-Voice

"Nothing is more despicable than respect based on fear. [Albert Camus: Notebooks 1935-1942 III.153].

Many Blacks truly fear knowing or telling the truth about the history of race relations in America because it so deeply distorts what they want to believe. But, ready or not, this is a story that needs to be told, over and over again, until we learn to respect ourselves and our ancestors.

It is stupid to allow our children to believe that Africans did not seek or fight for their freedom until Abraham Lincoln said it was OK in 1863! White historians gleefully proclaim that 5,000 of our ancestors fought for the American cause during the rebellion of 1776 to 1783. They do not tell us that 20 times that number sought their own liberty from slave-owners like George Washington.

The background to this uprising begins with Great Britain and France, who had been competing with each other for power and wealth in Europe, Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean. The French had invested their power in their massive army, while the British poured their resources into establishing colonies and building navies to dominate the seas.

War became inevitable in 1754 when Lieutenant Colonel George Washington, a Virginia colonial militia officer, "fired the shot heard around the world," ambushing and killing a French Lieutenant named Jumonville, not far from Pittsburgh. The blood bath that followed nearly bankrupted England and drove the French out of Canada and the Ohio Valley territories desired by land hungry, slave-owning colonists like Washington.

British Prime Minister William Pitt was forced to resign because of the great deficits incurred in the war. Successive prime ministers embarked upon a scheme to hire soldiers from Prince William of Hesse to post in the colonies. To pay off war debts and invoices from King George's German allies, they decided to tax the colonists via tariffs on imports such as tea, but mainly on the importation of slaves from Africa.

To avoid more war with the Native Americans, the British classified territories taken from the French as crown lands not available for colonization. This greatly angered Virginians and land speculators in places like Massachusetts.

Then, in 1772, Lord Chief Justice Mansfield of the British Supreme Court announced that slavery was illegal under British law, and slaves had to be set free. Slave owners, breeders, traders, shippers, insurers, lawyers and all the others in the international industry were furious.

Great men like Professor Adam Smith applauded the decision and called for the emancipation of not only the 15,000 African slaves in England, but also the nearly 600,000 in the colonies of America and the Caribbean.

The committee of correspondents in America, led by Patrick Henry, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison and hundreds of other rich colonials, viewed the rising tide of anti-slavery rhetoric as a threat to the economy of America. The course of rebellion was set.

When war did come in 1776, fully one-fifth of the African slaves in America actively supported the British cause since Lord Dunsmore, British Governor of Virginia, promised them freedom. The overwhelming majority of the others — elderly slaves, mothers and children — were neutral, but definitely sympathetic to the side that offered the greatest promise of liberation.

African-British historian Ellen Gibson Wilson gives us an excellent scholarly account in a book entitled *The Loyal Blacks*, first published in 1976, and ignored by American scholars who want to believe otherwise.

The fact is that when the war ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1783, the British proceeded to evacuate approximately 100,000 Africans to Canada, Nova Scotia, Jamaica and England as free men and women for their service.

George Washington and hundreds of others screamed for the British to return their alleged private property, but to no avail. General Carlton, the British commander in New York, met with General Washington to hear his protest and then continued in earnest to evacuate Africans, including those from Mount Vernon who had escaped slavery during the war. Among the most notable evacuees were Reverend David George who in 1773 had founded the first Black church in America, the Silver Bluff Baptist Church near Augusta, Ga., and Mother Mary Perth, who established numerous congregations in the Norfolk, Va. area.

Teaching children that Black men fought to help America win its liberty to increase slavery is an affront to our ancestors who died fighting to set us free.

Carl Rowan's Commentary

Parents, students need to get smart about scholarships

Special to Sentinel-Voice

I administer a scholarship program, Project Excellence, that has given more than \$52 million to over 2,100 black college-bound high school seniors in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area over the last 10 years. I am really proud of it.

But this is one of those days when I ask myself, "Why do I do it?"

Eight other judges and I have just read the essays and studied the grades, recommendations, SAT scores and extracurricular activities of 360 nominees for about \$4 million in scholarships this year. And we have declared 128 brilliant youngsters to be finalists.

But now come the rude, arrogant, insensitive parents of the students who didn't make the orals, abusing the Project Excellence staff verbally, demanding to see the records of the kids judged superior to their own, and threatening to sue to get a grand for their kid. I throw up my hands in disbelief.

I say to parents whose children seek any scholarship: Get involved early in the education process, and make sure that your child writes the best possible application for scholarships and other financial aid. Don't ever abuse potential donors if your child is not a winner, because the word can get around. And remember that programs such as Project Excellence do not owe your child anything that you can get in a lawsuit.

I am more dismayed by the parents of some winners than I am by the losers. One father insisted that we not discuss scholarships with his son, only with him.

We try to telephone each finalist at home in the evening to congratulate child and parent(s). I got an ugly letter last year from a woman complaining that a Project Excellence staffer called to announce a full four-year scholarship at the "too-late" hour of 10:20 p.m.

We've begun to get the annual calls from a few parents asking if the judges can convene on a special date to hear their child speak because "we're taking her to New York to see a Broadway play on the 28th," or "he's running in a track meet that day," or "she's going on a class trip."

Parents must have, and must instill in their children, some sense of priority. Does a class outing to Disney World mean more than a chance to win a \$10,000 or \$100,000 scholarship? That is one of the hard choices of the life that teenagers must learn to make knowing that scholarship judges and the world will not go to absurd inconveniences to enable them to escape hard choices.

Why do I do it when bad parents are so exasperating? Strictly for the kids, and their future greatness, and the well-being of a society that truly needs them.



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COMBINED 27 YEARS OF LEGAL EXPERIENCE

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